



Human Development & Relationships Institute

DIVISION OF EXTENSION
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

IMPACT REPORT

Letter from the Director



OUR MISSION

We promote the development of resilient individuals and communities across Wisconsin and at every stage of life through meaningful partnerships and research-based education.

OUR VALUES

Service

We meet community needs by collaborating with local residents and partners and connecting them with university resources.

Inclusion

We foster belonging and respect and amplify diverse voices within our communities and our work.

Growth

We rely on current research to guide our work and evolve through innovation and quality improvement.

Welcome to UW–Madison Extension’s Human Development & Relationships Institute.

We address life’s most profound questions – How do we develop as infants and adolescents? How do we grow into complex adults? Will we change as time goes by? How do we influence and get influenced by others? And how do we handle end-of-life transitions and financial planning?

These questions are the building blocks of human development, a field that studies how we change and stay the same over time. To find answers, we explore theories and research from various disciplines, including biology, genetics, neuroscience, psychology, sociology, and more.

Understanding human development means looking at all of these forces together. Nothing happens in isolation. This understanding can lead to personal growth, better professional practices, and positive outcomes for society.

In this report, you’ll discover the impact of programs designed to help families and individuals tackle these fundamental questions about their own development. From parenting and co-parenting to literacy, financial coaching, and even dealing with end-of-life planning, our institute has made a difference for families across Wisconsin.

Our goal is to take you on a journey to understand how our programs help families overcome challenges, promote strong social ties, build community capacity, and support family stability. Thank you for joining us in this exploration.

Warm regards,

DANIELLE Y. HAIRSTON GREEN, PhD, CFCS-HDFS

*Human Development & Relationships Institute Director
University of Wisconsin–Madison Division of Extension*



Our institute reached **93,588 educational contacts** over a two year period.

Our contacts include families, older adults, parents/caregivers, helping professionals, nonprofit employees/members, youth/students, and people involved with the justice system. We deliver these programs in the office, in the field, home consultations, and virtually.

We have over 400 partnerships across Wisconsin. We work with nonprofit organizations, government agencies, and business leaders to deliver our programming to residents. Our institute receives federal, state, and county funds. Our partnerships are critically important to Extension and the communities we serve. Some of our main assets are our community-based educators and campus-based specialists.

OUR PROGRAMS



Financial Education

Financial Education programs help families and individuals across the state achieve financial well-being – where they have control over day-to-day and month-to-month finances, have money to pay for financial emergencies, stay on track to reach financial goals, and have the financial freedom to make choices that allow them to enjoy life.



Life Span

Life Span programs support individuals and families as they transition through the aging process by providing programming and resources on family caregiving, healthy aging, end-of-life planning, and by building local partnerships to create aging-friendly communities.



Family Engagement and Relationships

Family Engagement and Relationships programs promote optimal child and family development via research-based educational classes and resources for parents and caregivers and the professionals who serve them.



View Human Development & Relationships Institute staff across Wisconsin:
go.wisc.edu/HDRI-staff

We Help Families Overcome Challenges

EVERY FAMILY FACES CHALLENGES AND TOUGH TIMES.

Some of these challenges could be finances, relationships, or unexpected family transitions. The good news is that families can bounce back from these challenges and become even stronger. The Human Development & Relationships Institute helps by giving families the tools they need to thrive at every stage of life.

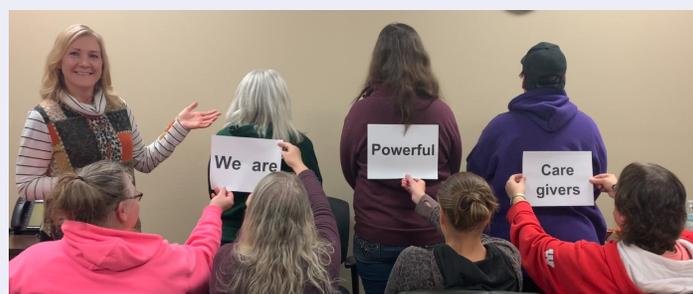


Caregiver Support

Educators work with **caregivers** who have a close personal relationship with and offer support to older individuals or children with long-term health issues or disabilities. Educators host semi-structured group settings to increase caregivers' peer support and learn from experts to help them navigate challenges they may face. Over 80 percent of participating caregivers who completed an evaluation tried new ways to manage stress or managed stress better than before. Additionally, caregivers attended support groups and reported feeling more hopeful.

77%

FELT MORE HOPEFUL



“I feel more capable as a caregiver and have a more positive attitude as I now understand I have to take care of myself – mentally, physically, and spiritually.” [Caregiving Program Evaluation]

Rent Smart

Rent Smart equips individuals with the knowledge and skills needed for successful housing experiences. Between 2020 and 2023, nearly 650 participants completed an evaluation. Over 80 percent of participants believed that Rent Smart would definitely help them obtain housing. Additionally, 80 percent strongly agreed that they understood the importance of building a positive relationship with their landlord. This is a significant increase compared to the 34 percent who felt the same way before the program.

How Rent Smart impacts renters six months after the program



Nine out of 10 participants who moved reported finding housing that is safer, more affordable, and of better quality than what they had before participating in the program.



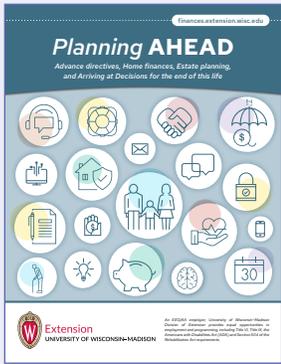
Over two-thirds of participants were able to resolve problems in their rental unit (e.g., getting their landlord to fix something in the unit).



80% who were not previously paying rent on time now do so after completing the program.

Planning AHEAD

Planning AHEAD is a unique comprehensive curriculum focused on end-of-life planning that is designed for people of all ages. Ninety-nine percent of participants who completed an evaluation felt they had gained necessary knowledge to carry out their end-of-life planning. Additionally, 89 percent reported feeling more confident about discussing these matters with their loved ones.



“ Sometimes it is good to get a little nudge in the right direction. We tend to think there is plenty of time. This program emphasized that it is never too early to plan ahead.”
[Planning AHEAD Participant]

Four- to six-month follow-up with Planning AHEAD participants



69% of participants said that they communicated at least one aspect of their end-of-life wishes with someone.



68% of participants indicated that they followed through with gathering documentation for planning or had completed documents on end-of-life planning.



Prior to the series only **16%** of participants were in an active or maintenance stage of end-of-life planning, and **60%** indicated that they were in one of those stages after completing the series.

“ Thinking about ways to reframe negative thoughts into something more positive was a helpful reminder. Getting affirmation that what I’m trying to do is worth it for my kids, and just not feeling so alone in the co-parenting struggles was helpful too.”

[Parents Forever Evaluation]

Parents Forever Co-Parenting Program

Parents Forever is designed for parents and caregivers who are going through divorce, are already divorced, or are in the process of separating (even if they were never married). Before Parents Forever, less than one-third of participants who completed an evaluation felt that they and their co-parent were handling co-parenting issues very well or extremely well. After completing the class, 93 percent of participants felt more prepared to guide their child through challenges related to divorce or separation, 93 percent learned new ways to strengthen their child’s support network, and 91 percent learned a new way to manage conflict with their co-parent.

Parents Forever six-month follow-up survey results



74%, or approximately three out of four participants, reported that a conversation that normally would have become a conflict did **not** escalate into a conflict.



85% said they tried to collaborate more with their co-parent to make choices in the best interest of their child.

We Promote Strong Social Ties

HAVING GOOD RELATIONSHIPS IS CRUCIAL FOR OUR WELL-BEING, BOTH AS INDIVIDUALS AND AS PART OF A COMMUNITY. Social cohesion is the strength of connections among people in a community. It includes things like sharing resources, supporting each other, and being part of social networks. The Human Development & Relationships Institute helps create social cohesion by connecting families to agencies and organizations so they can use resources effectively.



“When I showed my daughter the video of her dada reading a story her eyes lit up like I’ve never seen before. She listens and smiles the entire time. It’s part of our nighttime routine.” [Literacy Link Participant]



The Literacy Link

The Literacy Link program fosters strong family relationships by promoting positive, literacy-focused interactions between parents in jail and prison and their children. One of the challenges children face when a parent is incarcerated is the ability to connect. Between 2020 and 2023, 289 parents completed an evaluation after participating in the program. Parents experienced significant improvements in their attitudes and confidence regarding reading aloud and interacting with their children. Ninety-five percent of parents expressed their intention to maintain a strong bond with their children, and 81 percent planned to read more frequently to their children.

After receiving a video recording of parents in jail reading a picture book, we interviewed 43 caregivers who were living with their children during their parents’ incarceration. Ninety-three percent of these caregivers agreed that the videos helped their children stay connected to the parent in jail, and 56 percent reported reading to their children more often after receiving the video.

“I have never read to my children before. Now I want to when I get home. I’m not afraid anymore.” [Literacy Link Participant]

93%

Caregivers agreed that the videos helped their children stay connected to the parent in jail.

See [Page 13](#) for more information on *The Literacy Link*. 



View the Wisconsin Fatherhood Needs Assessment Report and our fatherhood podcasts: parenting.extension.wisc.edu/fatherhood-in-wisconsin

We reached **over 600** participants

through our **fatherhood** programming

2018

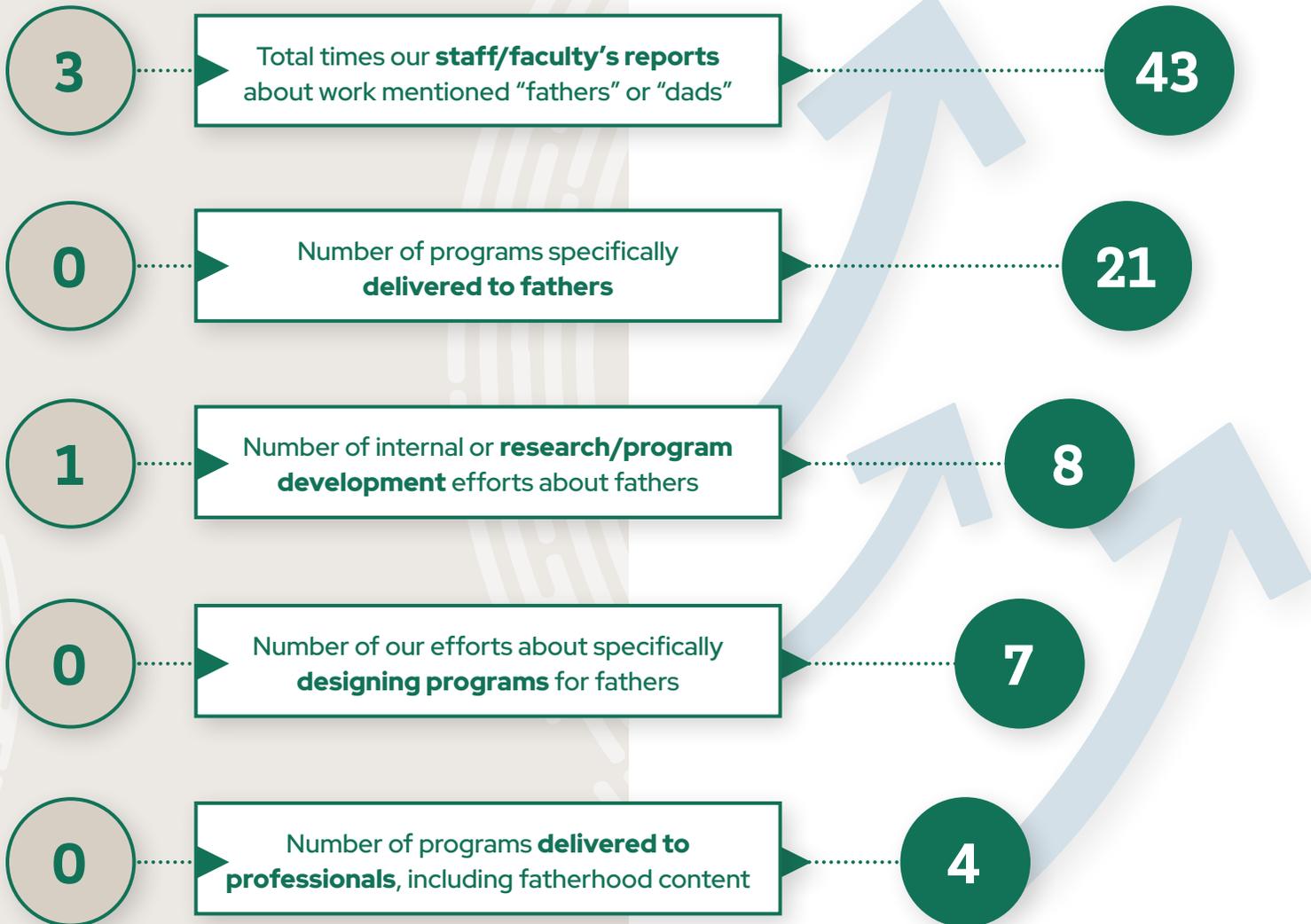
We began exploring **fatherhood as a priority.**

In 2018, we were beginning to **understand the need** to support fathers specifically and their connection to their children. Extension had little support for fathers despite their important role in their children's development.

2019-2023

Since then...

We have completed a large, statewide needs assessment and shared the results all over the state and country, **designed and held father-specific programs**, inspired others to focus on fathers, developed a podcast for fathers, and held a Fathers in Focus Research Symposium.



Social Isolation

Extension conducted a survey to evaluate how local agencies across Wisconsin are addressing *social isolation and loneliness* among older adults. The survey aimed to understand the effectiveness of their efforts. The findings from this survey have been compiled into a report. The report serves as a valuable resource for agencies across the state that serve older adults, providing insights on how to address social isolation within their own communities. Additionally, it facilitated connections between these agencies and local Extension offices, enhancing their capacity to respond effectively to the challenges exacerbated by the pandemic.



View the Social Isolation and Loneliness Report:
aging.extension.wisc.edu/articles/pandemic_programming_report



**NEARLY
100%**
felt they significantly
improved their knowledge
of how to support their
child's development

Focus on Fathers

The *Focus on Fathers* program is designed to bring dads together. It provides a platform for fathers to learn about social and emotional skill development. During the program, dads have the opportunity to share their experiences and insights with each other.

The results have been promising: nearly 100 percent of the respondents who participated in the program during the first eight months reported that it significantly improved their understanding of why their child needs to develop social and emotional skills, as well as their knowledge of how to support their child's development. Additionally, they felt a stronger sense of connection to other fathers and support networks.

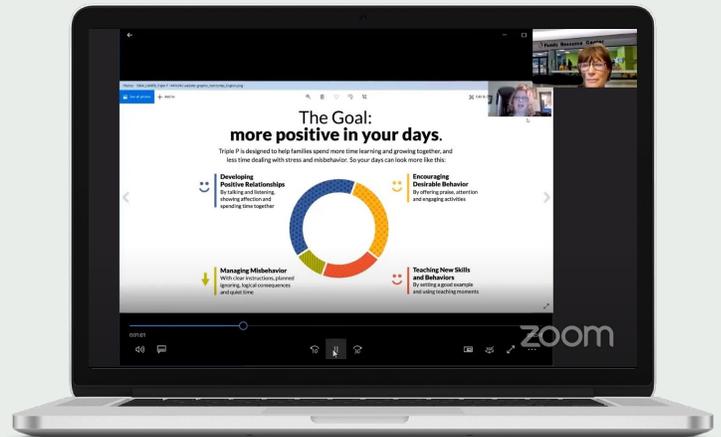


Triple P: Positive Parenting Program

The *Triple P: Positive Parenting Program* is a highly effective parenting program supported by over 35 years of research. It provides parents with straightforward and practical strategies to build strong, healthy relationships with their children.

Between 2021 and 2023, we collected post-class surveys from over 800 participants. The results were encouraging. Ninety-eight percent of participants reported learning something valuable that could enhance their family interactions, making them more positive. Additionally, 78 percent felt a stronger connection to community resources as a direct outcome of this class.

98%
learned something
valuable from Triple P
to enhance their family
interactions, making
them more positive



80%
felt more connected
to other people



Wise Wisconsin Series

Wise Wisconsin offers knowledge and resources on various topics with the goal of strengthening participants' social connections. By learning from others and sharing their own experiences, attendees built a sense of connection with others. Nine-hundred people registered for this series, and nearly all attendees who completed an evaluation felt connected to resources they were previously unaware of.

We Build Community Capacity



COMMUNITY CAPACITY BUILDING MEANS HELPING COMMUNITIES BECOME BETTER AT SOLVING THEIR OWN PROBLEMS. It's about giving them the tools to shape and control their environment. To increase community capacity, the Human Development & Relationships Institute builds strong relationships with partners to work together toward common goals. We also help organizations make better plans to tackle complex issues.

Wisconsin Department of Children and Families Dream Up! Grants

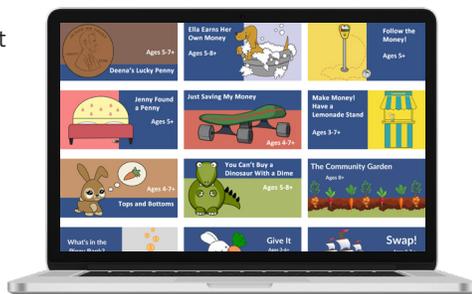
County-based educators are working collaboratively with communities to boost childcare availability. They provide essential information to new and aspiring childcare professionals, enabling them to establish successful childcare businesses. Additionally, they offer grants to existing providers, supporting them in expanding their childcare services.



“The Dream Up! Grant allowed us to provide more age appropriate learning tools for our 2 and 3 year old children. The grant allowed us to get an updated computer and interactive whiteboard to enjoy interactive learning activities and brain breaks for our kids.”
[School administrator/grant recipient]

Money As You Grow

All participants reported feeling capable of giving children access to concepts aimed at enhancing financial well-being. This is a significant improvement compared to the 51 percent who felt similarly before undergoing the training.



Percentage of participants who felt capable of giving children access to concepts aimed at enhancing financial well-being

PARTICIPANTS BEFORE
Money As You Grow Training

51%



PARTICIPANTS AFTER
Money As You Grow Training

100%



Encouraging Financial Conversations

Encouraging Financial Conversations is a program designed for case managers.

The goal is to empower clients to achieve their financial objectives and manage their money effectively. Over two-thirds of respondents reported using the financial information during discussions with clients. About half of the participants stated that they now initiate more frequent conversations about financial concerns with their clients compared to before the program. In 2023, 92 percent of participants who completed a post-program survey expressed feeling more comfortable working with clients on financial matters.

“I feel more confident in supporting my client’s financial struggles.”
[Financial Coaching]

Encouraging Financial Conversations follow-up survey

 **92%** expressed feeling more comfortable working with clients on financial matters.

“Everyone is in a different spot in their financial journey. It can be uncomfortable to talk about money. [It is] important not to be judgmental, but focus on customers’ goals.”
[Financial Coaching]



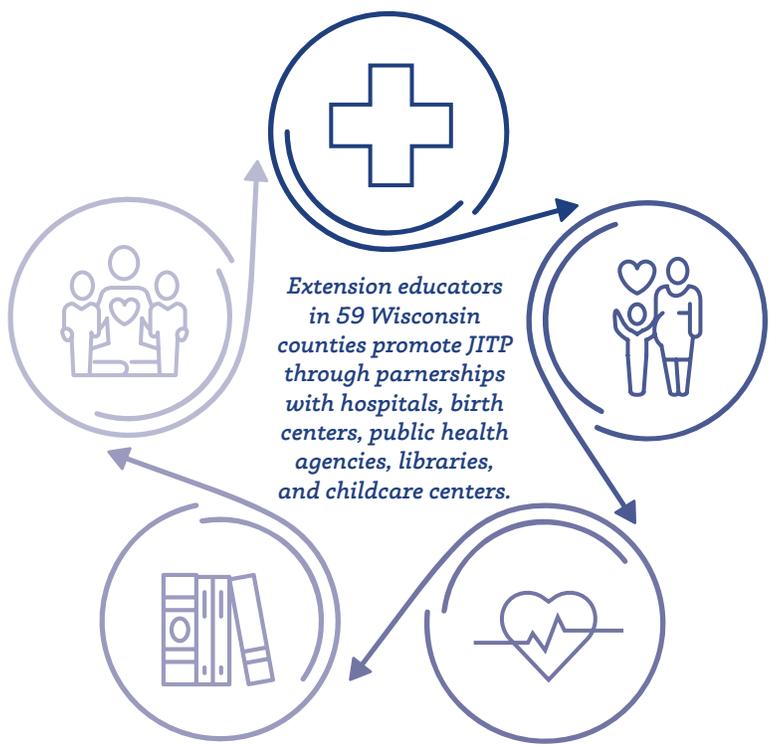
Just in Time Parenting

Just in Time Parenting (JITP) is a national online newsletter series for parents promoted in 59 Wisconsin counties. It is delivered through

community partners, including hospitals, birth centers, public health agencies, libraries, and childcare centers. These partnerships leverage the resources of the university to support parents in the transition to parenthood. Parents receive the newsletter via email from birth to age five. Depending on their child’s age, subscribers get six to 12 e-newsletters annually.

Despite being a mid-sized state, Wisconsin boasts the highest subscription rates to JITP in the country. In 2023, 1,543 Wisconsin subscribers represented 42 percent of the national subscriptions. Impressively, 776 of these subscribers have joined since January 2023.

The program’s impact extends beyond the subscribers themselves. Seventy-two percent of parent subscribers share the newsletter with their spouse, and 29 percent share it with grandparents. Parents find the information in JITP more valuable than the support provided by doctors or family and friends.



776 subscribers have joined JITP since January 2023 alone.

We Support Family Stability



TO HELP FAMILIES THRIVE, WE NEED TO FIX THE UNFAIR SYSTEMS THAT CAUSE PEOPLE TO DEVELOP DIFFERENTLY THROUGHOUT THEIR LIVES. This means working toward changing the conditions where people live, work, and play. States that work toward a fairer society tend to have stronger, more resilient families and communities.



We serve a diverse community of stakeholders across the state who are affected by inequalities and unfairness that could lead to family instability.

% of Wisconsin's population	% of our institute's contacts	
8%	10%	2020 census data shows that the Hispanic or Latino(a) population makes up 8% of Wisconsin's population. In 2022–23, 10% of the total contacts we reached identified as Hispanic, Latino(a), or Chicano(a).
6%	12%	The Black or African American population makes up 6% of the state population and 12% of our institute's contacts.
6%	5%	People with two or more races make up 6% of the state population and 5% of our institute's contacts.
3%	2%	The Asian population makes up 3% of the state population and 2% of our institute's contacts.
1%	3%	The American Indian and Alaska Native population makes up 1% of the state population and 3% of our institute's contacts.

The Literacy Link

The Literacy Link program has transformed jail waiting and visitation areas to create literacy-rich experiences for children. Additionally, some Wisconsin jails have changed their procedures to support this program. Notably, in both Dane and Racine Counties, facility staff have observed a positive change in how children engage with the visiting space. Children are drawn to the reading corner, where they read books with their parents during visits.

Currently, 14 correctional facilities actively participate in The Literacy Link. Our data suggest that for about three in four parents, The Literacy Link was their first-ever exposure to parenting education. Providing education in jail settings allows us to reach parents and families that are often underserved, including families that are disproportionately affected by incarceration. In terms of race and ethnicity, 60 percent identified as primarily Alaska Native/American Indian/Indigenous/Native American or Black/African American. Additionally, 21 percent of the participants are Chicano(a)/Hispanic/Latino(a).

 See [Page 6](#) for more information on *The Literacy Link*.



Financial Coaching

Financial coaching is a free service available to Wisconsin residents. Clients meet one-on-one with a professional who helps them create a money management plan based on their own priorities. In the 2022–23 period, we worked with 331 clients.

Key outcomes include 319 clients identified their family's financial goals; 265 clients felt empowered to tackle financial challenges independently, suggesting that these residents are now better equipped to navigate banking and other financial services; 134 clients increased their employment status; and 109 clients reached out for support to maximize their income (e.g., job training, resume building, tax support). Additionally, 63 percent of clients checked their credit report, which prepares them for applying for loans or credit cards. Among financial coaching clients, 46 reported paying off specific amounts of debt, totaling about \$138,000. Clients collectively added over \$75,000 to their savings, and 85 percent reported increased hope, confidence, or motivation since participating in financial coaching.

Reentry Ready: Focus on Finances

The Human Development & Relationships Institute works with people who are incarcerated and have often faced inequities, focusing on developing essential skills related to managing money. Participants learn how to track income and expenses, understand credit reports, and take initial steps to address debt. Of the 88 participants who completed evaluations during the first year of the **Reentry Ready: Focus on Finances** program, 92 percent said the course helped them learn a lot about how to track the money they have coming in and going out, and 87.5 percent said they learned a lot about the first steps to take when dealing with debt (the other 12.5 percent said they learned a little).

“I plan on using a lot from this class – avoiding scams and building credit, taking care of my debt and building credit, using a secured credit card and certificate of deposit and utilizing free credit reports, budgeting, and building up my credit score.”

[Reentry Ready: Focus on Finances]

“I plan to use the tracking, building and earning, and credit history lessons to create better opportunities for myself.”

[Reentry Ready: Focus on Finances]

“I made my first budget at 57 years old.”

[Reentry Ready: Focus on Finances]

Financial Coaching Key Outcomes



319 clients identified their family's financial goals.



265 clients felt empowered to tackle financial challenges independently.



134 clients increased their employment status.



109 clients reached out for support to maximize their income (e.g., job training, resume building, tax support).



63% of clients checked their credit report.



46 clients reported paying off specific amounts of debt, totaling about \$138,000.



\$75,000 was collectively added to clients' savings after financial coaching.



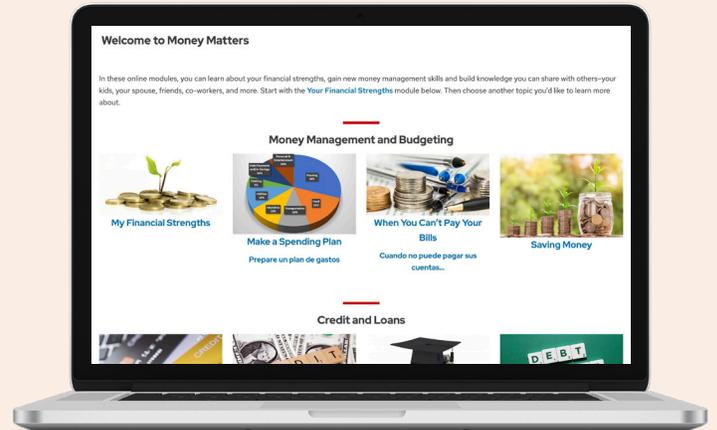
85% reported increased hope, confidence, or motivation since participating in financial coaching.

Money Matters

Money Matters is an online program designed for learners who want to enhance their financial literacy. It covers essential topics critical for individuals with low or middle incomes. These topics include personal financial strengths and behavior, budgeting, debt management, saving, credit building, health insurance, and retirement planning. The program is accessible to anyone seeking unbiased, verified financial education. Between 2020 and 2023, an impressive 97 percent of Money Matters participants expressed confidence – either very confident or somewhat confident – in their ability to achieve their self-set financial goals.

97%

Participants expressed confidence in their ability to achieve self-set financial goals.



Aging-Friendly Communities

The Human Development & Relationships Institute focuses on educating, providing resources, and taking leadership action that creates environments where all community members can successfully age in place. Extension offers information and resources related to the impact of population aging, which addresses ageism and promotes aging-friendly community design. By engaging key stakeholders, these efforts aim to transform communities. These communities become supportive environments for older people while also being attractive to young families seeking a place to settle down, in turn, positively impacting economic development and community vitality.





Acknowledgments

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